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News Briefs

Sudan cited as world's most violent abuser of religious freedom

(ENS) A year ago, the Sudan was cited as the world's most violent abuser of the right to freedom of religion and belief in the first annual report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom--and the situation is getting worse. (See www.uscirf.gov/reports) The report also concluded that religion was a major factor in the continuing civil war and that violations of religious freedom were intertwined with other human rights and humanitarian abuses.

The report says that the Sudanese government, dominated by Muslims, is committing genocidal atrocities against civilian populations in the southern part of the country, populated by Christians and animists. The commission said that it was disturbed by what appeared to be a direct connection between oil development and the government abuses.

The government is continuing its human rights abuses, including widespread bombing of civilian targets, abduction and enslavement by government-sponsored militias, manipulation of humanitarian assistance as a weapon of war, and severe restrictions on religious freedom.

Colorado bishop cancels commencement address over gay issue

(ENS) Bishop Jerry Winterrowd of Colorado has decided not to speak at the commencement at Denver's Iliff School of Theology, a United Methodist school, following protests over his recent decision on guidelines that would preclude non celibate gays and

guidelines that would preclude non-celibate gays and lesbians serving as clergy in the diocese. The ceremony will still be held at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral.

When Winterrowd issued his guidelines in February, it provoked protest at the seminary. The bishop met with students, staff and faculty to discuss the matter and said that he was "deeply distressed over the disagreement," according to the Denver Post.

Iliff has an Anglican Studies Program and Winterrowd serves as a trustee of the school. The relationship is due for a review, said the diocese, without predicting whether the controversy would alter the relationship. "The Anglican Studies Program is an important component of the Iliff community," said Heather Fitzgerald, speaking for the school.

"The bishop doesn't want to do anything to interfere with the special day for graduates," said the Rev. Bob Franken, speaking for the diocese.

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